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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4137  
INFO RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6261  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 8964  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4837  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0981  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 002575

SIPDIS

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/2018

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR PREL TH

SUBJECT: THAI PROTEST UPDATE: WARRANTS BUT NO ARRESTS

REF: A. BANGKOK 2546 (PAD PROTESTS CHALLENGE PM SAMAK)  
    1B. BANGKOK 2405 (TENSIONS ESCALATE AT THAI PROTESTS)  
    1C. BANGKOK 2555 (POLICE AND PAD COEXIST)

Classified By: DCM, James F. Entwistle, reason 1.4 (b, d).

Summary and Comment

11. (C) The tense stand-off between the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the administration of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej continued for the third straight day August 28 with no clear end in sight. PM Samak reiterated publicly and privately to the Ambassador (septel) that the use of force was not in the cards for dispersing the demonstrators, even though on August 27 the Criminal Court had issued warrants for the arrest of PAD leaders on charges of treason, and the Civil Court had issued an injunction for the PAD to clear the Government House compound.

12. (C) Comment: Senior leaders like Samak, Minister of Interior Kowit Watana and Police Chief General Patcharawat Wongsuwan appear to understand that, for the time being, executing the warrants for arrest would likely lead to bloodshed, with the PAD leaders shielded by some 10,000 to 15,000 supporters. The government's restraint has won popular support, even from the Parliamentary opposition Democrats, but it is unclear just how long Samak is prepared to wait the protest leaders out. End Summary and Comment.

Standoff enters day 3

13. (U) The drama between the PAD and the government of PM Samak continued to unfold through the night of August 27 when the Thai Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for nine PAD leaders and the Civil Court granted an injunction ordering the PAD to clear the Government House compound. Arrest warrants were issued for Chamlong Srimuang, Sonthi Limthongkul, Chaiwat Sinsuwong, Amorn Amornratatananant, Tuedphum Chaidee, Pibhop Dhongchai, Somsak Kosaisuk, Somkkiat Pongpaiboon, and Suriyasai Katasila, under four articles of the Criminal Code: Article 113, treason; Article 114, collecting forces and arms in preparation for treason; Article 215, conspiracy; and Article 216, failure to obey an authorities' order to cease a conspiracy. The Civil Court issued an injunction to the PAD, ordering it to end the occupation of Government House on the grounds their action

deprived government workers of their ability to perform their duties by blocking access to their offices.

14. (U) Immediately after the injunction was issued, Minister of Interior Kowit Watana, whom Samak had placed in charge of dispersing the crowd, broadcast a statement on government controlled NBT TV ordering all PAD demonstrators to leave the government house compound. The PAD's predictable response to Kowit and the warrants was to ignore them. By 1400 on August 28, the arrest warrants still had not been served, and the PAD still occupied the Government House compound. The PAD appealed the Civil Court injunction and issued a resolution that they would not surrender or move out of Government House. PAD leader Sonthi declared that the PAD would remain at the site until Sunday, August 31, when he believed his alliance would "claim victory."

15. (C) In the face of this PAD intransigence, Prime Minister Samak repeatedly stressed that his government would not use force to end the demonstration or "raid the site" to arrest the nine leaders. At an August 28 lunch meeting with the Ambassador (septel), Samak reiterated his policy. He added that by late August 28, the police should have formed a cordon around the Government House compound; protesters could leave, but no longer enter. (Note: Samak initially announced this plan during a press conference on the evening of August 126. End note.) Movements of police vans and trucks in the area mid-afternoon led to claims on the PAD stage that the police were preparing a crackdown; as of the time of writing, the cordon had not been established.

JOHN